There can be rewarding relationships between the sevens and the seventy-fives. They are both closer to the world of mythology and magic than all the busier people between those ages.

–J. B. Priestly

An Observational Study in Developing an Intergenerational Shared Site Program: Challenges and Insights

Christopher L. Hayes, PhD

ABSTRACT. This article provides strategic insights into developing and evaluating an intergenerational shared site program at The Community Programs Center (CPC) in Port Jefferson, NY. Conducted under a grant from the Administration on Aging, attention is given to the meth-
odological challenges in conducting intergenerational evaluation research. The Project Evaluator found that the use of videotaping created a host of difficulties for both the staff and participants. Emphasis is given to chronicling the critical importance of developing a multi-pronged approach to gathering data, and the consequences of utilizing graduate students as evaluators. The evaluation component involved comparing two groups of child/elder participants within a day-care setting during an eight-month period of time. Each session was videotaped and later analyzed for changes in certain participant attributes. Based on the observations gathered, it was found that curriculum development, staff commitment, and programmatic flexibility were critical components in creating an intergenerational-shared site program. Also, the teaching orientation of the intergenerational facilitator was found to play a role in fostering communication among the participants. Important recommendations are provided for both intergenerational practitioners and research evaluators who want to replicate the CPC model. Although positive change was observed in select participants, future evaluation efforts must track change and activity outcomes over a greater period of time. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Many of the growing number of frail and impaired elderly need non-institutional care options in the United States (Angel & Angel, 1999; Cox, 2000). Meanwhile, younger families are under tremendous pressure to remain employed and utilize the services of a child care program (Behr, Blank, & Schulman, 2000; Neal et al., 1990). Thus, many American communities may benefit from developing an intergenerational shared site program (IGSS) to address both needs. IGSS programs are defined as those in which children/youth and older adults receive ongoing services and/or programming at the same site concurrently, and where the participants interact through regularly scheduled planned intergenerational activities, as well as through spontaneous, informal encounters (Goyer, 2001).

Existing literature on the research and evaluation of IGSS programs has been described as vague and fragmented (Kuehne & Kaplan, 2001). Based on their review, these two authors posit the following problems: (1) there is a fail-
ure to analyze how the mission of an intergenerational shared site program is internally integrated within the curriculum, staff training, etc.; (2) prior investigations have been plagued by ineffective research designs which are not able to define what is a “mutually beneficial exchange” between child and elder; (3) there is a tremendous need to discern how the environment, activities, and characteristics of the participants play a role in supporting the contention that shared intergenerational facilities create positive change for both children and elders; (4) since most of the existing research has been descriptive in nature, little is known about how intergenerational relations change over time; and (5) replication of existing models requires understanding how activities, curriculum, and staff training are related to specific outcomes.

Due to the lack of information about IGSS programs, agencies have minimal “how-to” activity material to utilize when planning programs (Goyer, 2001). In analyzing the intergenerational programming literature, much can be gained by showcasing a demonstration project that attempted to implement and evaluate a IGSS program model from the outset. Insights gained from the experience could benefit practitioners in understanding how to begin the process of designing an intergenerational shared site curriculum, engaging staff in the evaluation process, and identifying successes and failures.

Drawing from the points highlighted above, The Community Programs Center (CPC) in Port Jefferson, NY embarked on a 12 month Title-IV Administration on Aging (A.o.A.), research and demonstration project to create and evaluate an IGSS program. A major goal of this Title IV Demonstration Project was to increase the quality of interaction between pre-school and elderly participants within a community setting that was determined by the grant applicant to have a high need for intergenerational programming and caregiver support assistance. In 2000, CPC analyzed federal, state, and local needs analysis reports for the Long Island, NY, region and found that despite a significant increase in the older adult population, community resources were not keeping pace with the need for adult day care centers, senior housing and assisted living, and caregiver respite support. In addition, the review indicated that although the area had a very low unemployment rate and an increase in the number of persons employed in lower-salaried jobs, there was an inadequate supply of child care services. In light of these needs, the development of an IGSS model provided the community with a centralized resource that addressed caregivers at both ends of the generational spectrum. Since other areas of the United States are dealing with similar demographic trends, the insights generated from this project will be used to publish a series of self-help brochures to assist others in creating IGSS programs.

The purpose of this article is to highlight how CPC attempted to generate an IGSS curriculum that would meet the needs of both population groups, and
create an evaluation component to assess the interactions within the planned activities. To further substantiate the value of implementing such a model, significant attention is given to identifying the types of exchanges that occurred over time between the program participants. In order to advance the quality of research within the IGSS area, the article pinpoints specific issues that require attention prior to implementing an evaluation component within an agency. The outcomes experienced by the CPC agency in developing a program and evaluation IGSS initiative will hopefully generate future models that further the overall specialty. Towards this end, specific recommendations are offered in replicating the CPC model and instituting an evaluation process.

**OVERVIEW OF CPC INTERGENERATIONAL MODEL**

To date, most of the intergenerational shared site program models have focused on preschool aged children interacting with older adults in long term care facilities (AARP, 1998). The CPC model established under the A.o.A. grant involved developing an intergenerational shared site program within a community setting that provided both child and adult day care services within a newly established building. Within the shared site facility, CPC attempted to develop intergenerational activities (primarily formal) for children and elders that led to “higher levels of interaction.” During the first month of the project, CPC staff generated a curriculum to facilitate intergenerational activities that took place in the adult day care room of the facility.

The author of this article served as the Project Evaluator. The evaluation was focused on interactional changes that occurred over a one-year period within the structured intergenerational activities developed by the adult and child care staff. Specifically, the staff created the following criteria to determine whether the curriculum was successful in generating changes: (1) increasing levels of verbal and non-verbal interaction between participants; (2) a desire to be involved and engaged within the intergenerational activity; (3) displaying acts of empathy (assisting, helping, or providing support) to members of the opposite generation without being encouraged by a staff member; (4) greater levels of intermingling between generational participants during periods of non-instructional activity; and (5) an interest in making contact with a member of the opposite generation outside the confines of the intergenerational activity itself.

Structured 45 minute sessions were developed to foster interaction between pre-school child participants (ranging in age from 3 years and 2 months to 4 years and 11 months) and elder participants (ranging in age from 63-95 years old). Each session was led by a primary facilitator with assistance from ancillary support staff from the child and adult day care components. Throughout the
project, each group met once a week. In addition, a number of volunteers and graduate student interns provided aid to the participants in completing activity tasks.

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

IGSS program directors indicate that finding activities appropriate for both children and elders based on their level of functioning is a significant challenge (AARP, 1998). Prior research has demonstrated that patients with dementia who are not provided with meaningful activities often suffer such negative consequences as apathy, agitation, and depression (Simard, 1999). In particular, a study that evaluated three intergenerational programs that connect child-care and adult-day care programs found that activities must be engaging and developmentally appropriate for both children and elders to be successful in fostering communication and relationship formation (Kaplan et al., 2001).

Based on these concerns, CPC child and elder care staffs developed a curriculum that was deemed engaging to both population groups. Intergenerational activities conducted within this demonstration project were grouped into four specific areas (see Appendix for complete overview of each activity area):

- **Music**—singing and playing of instruments that provided participants with an opportunity to gain insights into the other generation.
- **Cooking**—jointly preparing different recipes and foods that assisted in relationship building, creativity, practicing fine motor skills, and enjoying the meal together.
- **Gross Motor**—participation in joint physical activities that required teamwork, social interaction, and eye-hand coordination.
- **Arts and Crafts**—creation of specific end products that required cooperation and sharing, and at the same time, allowed for the expression of individual creative contributions.

A critical goal of undertaking an evaluation study of an IGSS program is to gain insights into the value and outcomes of the activities conducted (Goyer, 2001). In addition, replication manuals of ISSP programs (AARP, 1998; Ward et al., 1996) place a high premium on gaining staff input and collaboration in defining the parameters of program activities and outcomes. With this in mind, the Project Evaluator assisted the CPC intergenerational staff in identifying what they wanted to learn from implementing the designed curriculum. Based on a one-day meeting (prior to the inception of the activities), the staff identified the
following salient questions: (1) What types of activities promote the greatest level of interaction between the participants? (2) Does a particular facilitator style lead to a greater probability of attaining activity goals? (3) What were the biggest challenges in implementing the activities within a joint classroom setting? (4) To what extent would the videotaping impact the behavior of the participants? (5) How could the insights gleaned from conducting this project benefit the overall art of intergenerational facilitation?

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation utilized ethnographic field-based techniques to gather information on the CPC Pt. Jefferson Program. Two separate groups of children and elders (participating in structured intergenerational activities cited above) were observed weekly over an eight-month period of time. Group #1 contained 10 pre-school age children ranging in age from 3 years, and 2 months to 4 years and 9 months (7 were Caucasian, 2 Hispanic, and 1 African-American), and 13 elders (ages 71-94). The participants in group #1 met on Tuesday mornings from 10:00-10:45 a.m. Within the elder group, 4 were diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, 7 with Dementia, 1 was legally blind, and the final member suffered from depression.

Group #2 was composed of 10 pre-school children ranging in age from 3 years and 3 months to 4 years and 11 months (6 were Caucasian, 3 Hispanic, and 1 Middle-Eastern) with 14 elder participants (ages 63-95), that met on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00-1:45 p.m. The elder cohort in this group had 7 persons diagnosed with Dementia, 3 with Alzheimer’s, 1 with Diabetes, 1 with Picks Disease (a progressive form of dementia), 1 who was blind, and 1 with Depression.

The participants involved in this project were attending either the CPC child or adult day care program. The respective coordinators for each program approached selected caregivers (those they thought would be potentially predisposed to allowing their child/elder to participate in the project) for permission to be videotaped and observed within the intergenerational activities. Although assurances were made that complete confidentiality would be maintained, three families declined to participate without giving a specific reason.

The purpose of establishing group #2 was to evaluate whether the time of day for conducting intergenerational activities had any impact on participant interactions. It is important to note that participants selected for observation had no previous exposure to structured intergenerational activities. In addition, the participant’s caregiver was required to sign a consent form to participate in the study.
The following data collection strategies were utilized in observing both groups:

**Videotaping**—The Evaluator videotaped intergenerational sessions of groups #1 and #2 using a standard VHS camcorder. As discussed earlier, the CPC staff raised a concern that videotaping the intergenerational activities might distract the children and elders. To address this concern, the Project Evaluator brought the VHS camcorder into the child and adult-day care rooms and ran three separate trial filming runs with the participants prior to the onset of the formal activities. Significant attention was given to explaining the purpose of the camcorder, and why it was necessary to record the activities. During each group session, taping included the children entering the adult day care area, recording the entire intergenerational activity, and the final interactions between children and elders before departing the room. Each respective videotape session was dated, categorized based on activity type, and filed in chronological order.

Despite every attempt to position the camera in the far background so that participants did not perceive it as obtrusive and impacting on the process, we found this very difficult to accomplish. In particular, the majority of children were aware that the camera was recording events, and sometimes changed or adapted their behavior due to curiosity. Of greater concern is that intergenerational classroom facilitators fully acknowledged that videotaping the sessions created a degree of “pressure” to meet curriculum outcomes. In essence, the camera created an unnatural environment for the facilitator who recognized that her instructional skills, delivery of content, and participant reactions would be viewed at a later time for evaluation purposes. Lastly, the evaluation team found that videotaping an intergenerational activity did not always document the full dynamics among participants (i.e., the angle of the lens could not always capture events taking place in all areas of the classroom).

**Activity Observational Notes**—To supplement the videotaping, CPC staff and volunteers took observational notes during each activity. Observers were provided a form for taking notes, and were trained on how to capture a comprehensive overview of what was taking place within a given intergenerational activity. Observational notes focused on the following themes: (a) How was the intergenerational activity introduced or begun? (b) How did children/elders respond to the activity? (c) Within the activity, who is involved? (d) What are participants doing at various points in the activity? (e) What are the variations (if any) in how participants are engaging in the activity? (f) What specific actions, behaviors, and comments made by the participants indicate that the activity curriculum’s
goals were satisfied or not achieved? (It is important to note that observers had prior experience in intergenerational programming, and were given the latitude to document anything that was found to be particularly noteworthy beyond the themes highlighted above.)

Progress Log Journal—During periods of the week when each respective intergenerational group was not meeting, CPC staff asked to record any comments, actions, or behaviors of children/elders that they believed were related to the intergenerational meetings. The criteria established to document something in the log was based on a staff member’s perception that a participant was indicating something noteworthy about their involvement in the intergenerational program. For example, if a child expressed an interest in going to the intergenerational activity prior to its scheduled time, the exact statement was documented in the journal. The rationale for having a progress log journal was to capture ancillary behaviors that suggested a relationship (either positive or negative) with the on-going intergenerational group meetings. Each staff member had in-depth daily experience with each participant outside of the intergenerational program, and was given the latitude to make a judgment that the comment, action, or behavior was associated to the group.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

A multi-pronged approach was used to analyze the videotapes and recorded observations from both groups. Upon the completion of the intergenerational group sessions, 26 graduate students (in the Master’s Program in Gerontology at Southampton College) were recruited to analyze the videotapes. The students were recruited by the CPC Project Director who attended individual classes asking for volunteer recruits.

Each student was provided with two pictures (one child and one elder) to track (which amounted to a 2/1 ratio). Videotapes were presented in chronological order beginning with the first session of each group. The Project Evaluator instructed each student to fill-out an observation sheet for his or her respective participant after viewing each 45-minute intergenerational activity. The observation sheet required students to generate a written statement concerning their impression of how well their assigned participants interacted within the intergenerational activity. In addition, each student was provided an opportunity to write out open-ended comments regarding their observations of the following behaviors (these were selected based on the activity observational logs completed by the CPC staff):
• Level of participation in the activity
• Level of enthusiasm for the activity
• Smiles or grimaces during activity
• Shows concern for other participants
• Shows physical affection (hugs/touching)
• Shows signs of agitation or distress
• Level of interaction with opposite generation/partner
• Wanders or strays during activity
• Prefers watching others

The Project Evaluator and Project Director conducted an in-depth orientation with the students that included providing an overview of the project’s goals and objectives, articulation of their role within the analysis process, and instructions concerning completion of the forms. It is important to note that prior to observing the videotapes, no attempt was made to train the students on interrater reliability testing procedures. As highlighted in the discussion section, this was a major drawback that needs to be addressed in future efforts.

A secondary procedure involved interpreting the activity observation notes and progress log journal for the entire observation period utilizing content analysis. After reviewing these documents, the observations noted by the staff and observers fell into three broad categories:

• Child/Elder Observations—consistent observations that the staff deemed relevant.
• Intergenerational Content—common and recurrent issues regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum.
• Intergenerational Process—repetitive observations and themes concerning the programming nature of the CPC model.

To further analyze the observations, the Project Evaluator and Project Director met with the CPC staff for three four-hour debriefings to discuss each theme in detail. The staff played a significant role in determining the findings that would be relevant to ongoing program refinements and other projects seeking to replicate the CPC intergenerational model.

**FINDINGS**

*Child/Elder Observations Themes*

The analysis of the videotapes, activity observational notes, and journal logs revealed that there was little significant verbal communication (e.g., no
acknowledgement upon entering the activity room; minimal exchanges or questions of the other; or vocalizing needs or interests) between child/elder participants during the first several class sessions. Observers consistently noted that both children and elders were initially focused on following the instructions of the facilitator within the given activity. Initially, interactions between the generational groups was predicated on specific facilitator directives (for example, find a partner to play catch).

After a maximum of three group intergenerational sessions, there was a significant increase in verbal exchanges (e.g., asking for help in completing a task or function), activity interaction (e.g., voluntarily selecting a partner of the opposite generation to complete a task), and overall comfort (e.g., sitting next to a new child or elder wherein familiarity had yet to be established). Most notable, we observed an increase in the display of generational empathy after five group sessions (e.g., assisting, helping, or providing support to a participant without being encouraged by a staff member). Examples of such behavior were usually between children and elders that were able to verbally communicate with each other. It is important to note that several children and elders were not observed communicating throughout the duration of their class sessions together.

Of critical importance is the observation that intergenerational programming may foster and strengthen outgoing and demonstrative behaviors within certain children. For example, 2 children in group #1 and 3 children in group #2 were observed to be much more verbal and outgoing towards elder participants at the conclusion of the group sessions. Both staff and student observers consistently noted that although these children were highly verbal amongst their peers, they refrained from interacting with any older participants when the program began. At the conclusion of the group, observers noted frequent hugging, smiling, and frequent eye contact by these children directed towards several older participants.

One of the most consistent and observable changes over time for both groups was the increase in generational closeness (the degree to which a participant physically approached one or more individuals of the opposite generation during the group period). The observation logs note that some of the most meaningful encounters occurred during those activities that were highly non-structured. For example, both groups found the “tarp exercise” to evoke pleasure and the potential for relationship building. Within this activity (conducted during week three), the staff and volunteers hold a large tarp high enough so that a child or elder can enter it, and a participant from the opposite generation “finds” the individual under the awning, and both come out together. It is important to note that these types of activities acted as a “prompt”
for certain children and elders to establish long-lasting relationships throughout the remainder of the group meetings.

The most noted outward behavior identified in the videotapes and activity observational notes was the act of spontaneous “touching.” Although few examples of physical touching occurred during the first four weeks of group interaction (e.g., two child/elder pairs in group #1 were observed physically embracing the other), it dramatically increased over time (after the conclusion of session 8, a total of six pairs in this group were routinely embracing the other at the beginning or end of a session). Towards the end of the group sessions, many examples were found of elders touching a child on the shoulder or reciprocal acts of mutual embracing (group #1 observers classified a total of 68 “touching encounters”; group #2 participants had 78 such encounters). With increased familiarity, observers noted that elder participants (even those with moderate cognitive impairment) used “touch” as a silent communicative tool to demonstrate acceptance, or pleasure at seeing a particular child.

**Intergenerational Content Themes**

As discussed earlier, the CPC staff wanted insights into whether overly structuring the time within the intergenerational activity affected the level of interaction between participants. An analysis of the observation logs demonstrated a relationship between the degree of structure within a given activity and the level of spontaneous communication and interchange among the participants. The CPC facilitators in group #1 organized child/elder interaction within the confines of the activity, structuring interactions to satisfy the goals of the given activity. Group #2 facilitators also utilized a structured approach to activities, but more time was allowed for informal interaction. In comparing both groups, observers found that less structure promoted higher levels of spontaneity and interaction among children and elders. Such open-ended activities like throwing a basketball, playing ring-toss, or peek-a-boo under a tarp (highly non-structured) often led to increased interaction between children and elders.

A major goal of the CPC Child Care Program was to promote self-sufficiency—to complete activities and ask for assistance as needed. The videotape observations demonstrated that children came into the intergenerational environment with a desire to work independently on tasks. For example, even though children had difficulty swinging a bat or gluing small objects together (activities that required more advanced gross and fine motor skills) this did not initially prompt them to ask for help from an elder participant. However, a major dynamic observed in both groups was that over time, children perceived the elder as a “help agent” in completing difficult tasks. This was initiated by fa-
cilitators actively encouraging elders to work with the children on given tasks. Towards the middle and end of the project period, we observed that children sought more collaborative assistance and help from the elders without facilitator encouragement.

An important consideration in developing intergenerational curriculum is that it must be developmentally appropriate for both participant groups. Such activities as sing-a-long engaged the children, but not the elders. In both groups, evaluators determined that cooking activities created the highest degree of success in fostering collaboration between children and elders. Such tasks as peeling fruit, handling a knife, or utilizing a measurement instrument provided elders with an opportunity to work as a “partner” with a child. More importantly, evaluators observed a much higher frequency of smiling, concentration, reminiscence, and less agitation amongst elders during cooking activities as compared to all other curriculum activities.

As highlighted earlier, it was our expectation that elder participants with dementia would be more engaged in the intergenerational activities if they played a meaningful role in them. In both groups, we found that if elders were given a specific task within the intergenerational activity, they were more likely to stay focused and not wander. For example, certain activities (cooking and arts and crafts) consistently increased their level of communication and interaction. Within the context of these activities, elders with higher demonstrated cognitive functioning displayed greater levels of involvement by assisting children with completing a task. As repeatedly noted in the activity log notes, “elders within intergenerational programs want to feel needed and important.”

A significant theme derived from the videotape observations was that elders who tended not to be involved directly in an activity still derived some benefit from being within the intergenerational environment. Prior research with Alzheimer’s patients (Simard, 1999; Volicer, Mahoney, & Brown, 1998; Woods & Ashley, 1995) found that simply changing environmental stimuli can reduce agitation, anxiety, and depression. In the same vein, evaluators found that those elder participants that did not routinely participate in activities (e.g., primarily sitting on a couch) did demonstrate outward appearances of enjoyment (e.g., smiling and laughing) and contentment (e.g., did not get up or wander) while watching the activity. This finding suggests that some cognitively impaired participants who cannot participate due to the progression of the disease still benefit from the surrounding intergenerational environment.

Of significant interest was determining how pre-school children without any prior intergenerational learning exposure would react and behave with an older population that had cognitive impairments. A striking finding within the videotapes and activity observation sheets was that 9 pre-school children ei-
ther ignored or did not consciously appear to be aware of the cognitive limitations of the elder participants. What did appear to be of interest to some children during the initial stages of both groups was ascertaining the purpose of a wheelchair, hearing aid, or physical aid. Once explained, no children were found to re-visit or dwell on any age-related characteristic. As one graduate student evaluator commented, “it is as if children want to understand the object, but don’t have the desire to make the elder feel that they are odd or different because of it.”

**Intergenerational Process Observations**

One of the most important roles for the Project Evaluator in the CPC Demonstration Project was to identify specific issues in developing and implementing an ISSP from the staff members’ perspectives. To document such issues, the evaluator, in concert with the Director and Associate Director, met with the intergenerational facilitators, classroom support staff, and project staff at three different points in the evolution of the grant. Each meeting was recorded to highlight their viewpoints and perspectives. In particular, we were interested in understanding from a staff perspective whether the goals and objectives of creating an ISPP were being met.

Based on these in-depth debriefings, it became evident that the staff perceived that the biggest challenge was the tremendous amount of time and effort required to create a fully functioning ISSP model. The staff indicated that the most important element in developing this model involves understanding the participants within the program. The videotapes validate the perception that each child and elder is a unique “individual” with certain behavioral tendencies, personality attributes, and skill levels. As one facilitator noted, “you just can’t throw them into a room and think intergenerational programming is going to work, it takes tremendous time and effort, it requires a special group [staff] that is willing to make the effort.”

A secondary concern identified by the staff involved environmental influences that affected intergenerational participation. One such environmental influence frequently noted was the time of day. Children in group #2 seemed overall to be much more engaged in intergenerational activities compared to group #1 because they already had napped, eaten lunch, and were attentive for an early afternoon program. Another environmental influence was noise. Student evaluators and staff noted that noise in group #1 generated by the participants, support staff, and the outside hallway deterred meaningful exchanges. The adult-day care coordinator noted that background noise can be particularly difficult for participants with dementia.
Finally, an important process concern raised by the staff involved the impact of teaching styles on the intergenerational program. The child-care intergenerational facilitator for group #1 was perceived by both staff and evaluators as being more “directive” in approach: She closely followed the curriculum script and was task-oriented. The group #2 facilitator was perceived as being “non-directive”: She allowed the curriculum to take on a life of its own while the task was a secondary priority. A review of the activity logs found that the depth of interaction amongst each group was strikingly different. For example, 8 children in group #2 (compared to 4 in group #1) self-selected an elder partner during activities, which lead to spontaneous interchange. The staff concluded that a more non-directive facilitator style contributed to higher levels of activity participation, greater frequency of physical affection, and more in-depth interaction amongst the participants.

DISCUSSION

The CPC Port Jefferson Intergenerational Project was started with the mandate to establish a program with an evaluation component that could help practitioners in replicating new initiatives. Within the context of establishing the program, CPC staff articulated a series of questions that had meaningful implications for enriching their intergenerational roles and activities after the grant was concluded. This section will highlight specific programmatic and evaluation insights that could be helpful in replicating future initiatives.

Program Replication

After the conclusion of the group activities, CPC staff were asked to provide recommendations to other agencies and practitioners that desired to establish an intergenerational-shared site program. As highlighted below, their insights were supported by themes identified in the activity logs and progress notes.

1. Prior to developing an IGSS program, agency administrators need to carefully analyze whether there is adequate staffing to implement the program. Within the CPC Port Jefferson Program, staff acted as intergenerational facilitators and activity observers in addition to their other normal duties. The staff believe that although dedication and passion is a critical ingredient in making intergenerational programming work, it can be taxing and stressful. Serious consideration should be given to identifying one full-time IGSS facilitator with the mandate to oversee curriculum development, create regularly scheduled planning
meetings between child and elder care staff, and change program activities based on evaluation feedback.

2. On-going training is a critical component for all staff engaged in intergenerational programming and evaluation. As highlighted earlier, the staff identified five specific outcomes that would determine “success” of the program. In retrospect, it would have been extremely beneficial to have more access to training, skill development, and knowledge to assure that the established benchmarks would be achieved.

3. Based on the CPC experience, attention should be given to designing curriculum that allows for as much spontaneous interaction as possible between child/elder participants. The completion of a specific activity or project is less important compared to facilitating a process that fosters relationship development and communication. It is important to recognize that child and elder care facilitators utilize different classroom skills and techniques when working with their respective population groups. However, in working together within the intergenerational arena, each particular teaching style can provide a vital contribution to achieving program outcomes. Within an intergenerational activity, we should strive to create a balance between directive and non-directive facilitation styles.

4. Intergenerational facilitators should carefully evaluate the environmental factors that affect participant interaction. Time of day, outside extraneous noise, and seating should be considered before implementing intergenerational activities.

5. Within an IGSS facility, interaction between children and elders should not be confined to regularly scheduled times for interaction. For example, CPC staff are now promoting opportunities for participants to interact on a one to one basis by elders visiting the children’s room and participating in “story time.”

Intergenerational Communication

It is critical to note that the most meaningful interactions between child and elder participants did not occur immediately. Such behaviors as communicating, embracing, or generational empathy took time to cultivate within the classroom setting. As noted earlier, it took a minimum of three sessions before these behaviors started to appear. In evaluating the observational logs, we discovered that the third activity (gross motor skills) naturally created an opportunity for children and elders to mix with each other. Playing basketball or bowling provided participants with the freedom to make contact and bond with each other. An important implication of this experience is that the “intergenerational classroom” requires a degree of flexibility and freedom for communication to begin.
Touching and embracing between older participants and younger children appeared to signify some type of emotional connection—possibly love, gratitude, or something else. Although not all participants used touch as a form of communication, it appeared to advance the relationship between certain children and elders. Future research would be beneficial in establishing what these “outward displays of affection” actually mean within the intergenerational context.

Curriculum Development

A central insight gleaned from the findings is that careful consideration must be given to the types of activities that will lead to higher levels of interaction. Activities such as cooking and arts and crafts were less structured compared to others, and allowed elders and children to have the freedom to establish meaningful relationships. In hindsight, the CPC staff learned that curriculum must be introduced that allows for the greatest opportunities for discussion, interaction, and relationship building. Of paramount importance in the beginning stages of building an intergenerational curriculum is asking one central question: \textit{How will the activity promote relationship building, and at the same time, meet the developmental needs of both child and elder?}

At the same time, intergenerational practitioners need to experiment with different classroom activities (beyond the ones developed for this project) that bring out the full human potential of both child and elder participant. Child and elder care staff should jointly collaborate in curriculum development, activity facilitation, and evaluation outcomes. It is important to note that each respective programmatic area (child care and elder care) have unique insights to offer in generating developmentally appropriate activities.

A significant implication in developing intergenerational curriculum is providing participants with opportunities to share and exchange information concerning themselves as individuals. The CPC model demonstrated that time needs to be dedicated within the early formation of the group with “ice-breaking” exercises that allow children and elders to share personal information and experiences. The most meaningful exchanges between child and elder participants occurred when they were expressing something about their past, discussing an event that had particular significance in the present, or performing a task that illustrated a competence.

Evaluation Insights

Based on the various challenges experienced in analyzing the videotapes, and utilizing graduate students as evaluators, future initiatives need to consider
adopting different analysis strategies. In hindsight, it is clear that there are pre-conceptions of what constitutes “intergenerational learning.” Based on this insight, if student evaluators are utilized, more attention must be given to familiarizing them with the broad range of behaviors that can be observed when mixing pre-school children and adult day-care populations.

Our experience was that certain students had a proclivity to overestimate their knowledge of what constituted intergenerational learning. Although every attempt was made to encourage reviewing the tapes from a non-biased perspective, there was a tendency to critique the process versus what behaviors were being observed among their individually assigned participants. A major conclusion drawn from this experience is that greater emphasis needs to be placed in screening students being asked to evaluate intergenerational learning.

Much of the above can be addressed by spending more time ensuring that the instruments utilized for evaluation purposes contain a higher degree of objectivity. Equally important is requiring the Project Evaluator to develop a more comprehensive training program for staff and students that includes the role and nature of evaluation instruments, the importance of interrater reliability testing, and strategies for observational note-taking. In future efforts, an equal amount of attention must be devoted to IGSS program development and constructing an effective evaluation component. Implementing these recommendations will directly address some of the methodology concerns articulated by Kuehne and Kaplan (2001) within IGSS evaluation studies.

The CPC Port Jefferson initiative demonstrates the critical importance in developing longitudinal studies to determine intergenerational program outcomes. Without question, one-year was only “breaking the surface” in understanding how this project impacted on the child and elder participant. Future efforts need to track participants over a much longer period of time. In addition, more energy needs to be devoted to capturing the insights of the child/elder caregiver who may be in the best position to understand and observe how intergenerational learning influences the participant within the home and other settings. Finally, I can perceive a host of benefits in conducting on-going debriefing sessions with children and elders to ask them to verbalize their reactions to program activities. We may be underestimating their capacity to offer input concerning the value of an intergenerational classroom experience.

**CONCLUSION**

This Demonstration Project represents one attempt to gain insights into the challenges inherent in formulating a specific IGSS model. The CPC project re-
inforces the critical importance of developing models that integrate curriculum development, staff training, and evaluation into the IGSS mission. As highlighted by Kuehne and Kaplan (2001), IGSS research and evaluation studies will continue to be problematic unless we are able to determine how each program component contributes to success. For this to occur, we need to be constantly adapting intergenerational activities based on evaluation research that highlights what is working, and what needs to be changed. Clearly, we found that identifying particular questions that the staff wanted to gain insights from contributed to developing a meaningful model.

Practitioners that wish to build on the CPC experience need to carefully develop curriculum and activities that are not overly structured. One of the greatest lessons learned in developing this process was the realization that children and elders respond positively to those activities that require a mutual expression of talents and skills. If we want elder participants to develop positive interactions with pre-school children, we need to create activities that give them a meaningful role. At the same time, both children and elder participants should be more involved in creating intergenerational activities that are deemed meaningful and important. For this reason, a non-directive facilitation style can further pull and engage participants in taking “ownership” over the process. In my opinion, the balance to be achieved is creating a structured event that allows for a wide range of interactive experiences of expression.

Change, interaction, and helping behaviors amongst child and elder care populations require time, careful planning, and skilled implementation—it doesn’t happen by chance.

REFERENCES


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• Music Activities (Singing 1907 song “School Days”; Pitching and hitting baseball while singing “Take me Out to the Ball Game”; Intergenerational Bell Choir).

  1. Foster positive interaction based on an enjoyable activity
  2. Restoration of memories
  3. Increase and reinforce vocabulary
  4. Provide an outlet for emotional expression
  5. Stimulate the formation of new experiences

• Cooking Activities (Peeling and chopping eggs to make “Egg’ceptional Sandwiches”; Pairing together elders and children to make “Creamy Alphabet Soup”; Creation of “Fruity Pizza”).

  1. Foster relationship building by jointly creating a food item
  2. To stimulate collaboration and problem-solving
  3. To increase and promote fine motor skills
  4. To promote creativity within the recipe process
  5. To enjoy together the “end-product”

• Gross Motor Activities (“Intergenerational Name Game”—Children and elders throw ball to each while calling out name; “Indoor Basketball”—elders and children form teams to count how many baskets they make; “Bowling”—intergenerational pairs knock down pins).

  1. Strengthen large muscle groups
  2. Generate interaction within physical activity
  3. Improve social skills based on cooperation
  4. To increase eye-hand coordination
  5. To promote a sense of team spirit

• Arts and Crafts Activities (Creation of “Holiday Wreaths”; “Intergenerational Painting”—elders and children jointly paint a landscape).

  1. To promote and strengthen fine motor skills
  2. To increase self-esteem based on task completion
  3. To provide an opportunity to share and cooperate
  4. To reinforce the concept of “choice” and “individuality”
  5. To provide caregiver with a finished product